

No. 4393.13



[illegible]

*This book was issued to the borrower on the date
last stamped below.*

[illegible]

3

A

FAREWELL SERMON

UPON LEAVING

THE OLD MEETING HOUSE

OF THE

FIRST PARISH IN CAMBRIDGE

On Sunday, December 1, 1833.

BY WILLIAM NEWELL,
PASTOR OF THE SOCIETY.

Printed by Request of the Society.

CAMBRIDGE:
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

1834.

2

1

TO HIS PARISHIONERS,

WITH AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCES AND CHRISTIAN HOPES,

THESE DISCOURSES

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.

DISCOURSE.

HAGGAI, ii. 3.

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory ?

WE are assembled for the last time in this ancient house, where of old our fathers worshipped, and where we have so often communed together with God. The sanctuary, which, for nearly four-score years has welcomed within its doors the multitudes that have here kept holy time, — the altar, from which the Sabbath prayer, the Sabbath hymn, the lessons of Holy Writ, and the words of the Christian preacher have been so long heard, are now to be forsaken and removed. We come to bid them farewell.

Upon this occasion it may be gratifying to my hearers to learn some particulars of the age and history of the house which we are about to leave ; and to be informed of the little that can now be known concerning the several places of worship which preceded it. For this purpose we must go back two hundred years to the original establishment of the religious society for whose use they have been successively erected. This society, as you all know, was one of the first churches planted by our Pilgrim Fathers in the American wilderness ;

and, for its antiquity, the celebrity of its founders, the high character of its pastors, and its ancient connexion with the university in this place, which was once united with it in the offices of public worship,* it has some claims upon the interest even of those who are not immediately connected with it.

Its history commences with the early settlement of this town. In the year 1630, soon after the arrival of the fleet which brought Winthrop and Dudley with their Pilgrim band to the shores of New England, it was determined to build a fortified town to protect the colonists from the apprehended incursions of the Indians. The spot which was finally selected for this purpose was that which we now so peacefully inhabit; where the Red Man of the forest, when by some rare chance he wanders among us from his distant home, comes but as a timid stranger, an object of curiosity indeed, but not of dread. "After divers meetings at Boston, Roxbury, and Watertown," says Deputy Governor Dudley in his letter to the Countess of Lincoln, dated March 28, 1631, "on the twenty-eighth of December, we grew to this resolution, to bind all the assistants (Mr. Endicott and Mr. Sharp excepted, which last purposeth to return by the next ship into England) to build houses, at a place, a mile east from Watertown, near Charles River, the next spring, and to winter there the next year; that so by our examples, and by re-

* Since 1815 there have been distinct religious services on the Sabbath for the members of the college in the university chapel.

moving the ordnance and munition thither, all who were able might be drawn thither, and such as shall come to us hereafter to their advantage, be compelled so to do ; and so if God would, a fortified town might there grow up, the place fitting reasonably well thereto."

According to the agreement which is here mentioned by Dudley (who was himself one of the chief founders of Cambridge, "being zealous to have it made the metropolis"*) in the spring of 1631, the building of "the New Town" was commenced and carried on with much activity. A fortification, of which some traces are supposed to be still visible, was made about it at the public expense. As it was originally intended for the seat of government, and the residence of the chief men of the colony, it was for a time the object of especial legislative attention and patronage ; but, in consequence of the failure of the governor and others to fulfil their agreement to build and settle in it, as well as the disadvantage of its situation for purposes of commerce, it soon appeared evident that the expectations of its founders could not be fully realized. It must have grown very rapidly, however, during the first two years of its settlement ; for we find it described by a writer, † who returned from this country to England in 1633, as "one of the neatest and best compacted towns in New England, having

* Prince. See Appendix, Note A.

† Wood in his New England's Prospect.

many fair structures, with many handsome contrived streets." In the summer of 1632, "the Braintree Company," which had begun to settle at Mount Wollaston, removed by order of court to this place.* Having thus received a considerable addition to their numbers, and being now in the expectation of the arrival of the celebrated Thomas Hooker, who had been invited from Holland by his old friends and hearers of the company just mentioned to become their pastor, the inhabitants of the village began to make preparation for the regular observance of religious ordinances, and the support of a settled ministry among them.

This, as you well know, was one of the first objects of attention with our ancestors; "it being as unnatural" (to use the quaint language of one of our ancient historians) "it being as unnatural for a right New-England man to live without an able ministry, as for a smith to work his iron without a fire." As soon, therefore, as they were settled in their new habitations, in the course of the year 1632, according to the annalist, Prince, who states it upon the authority of a manuscript letter, the people of Newtown (as this place was called until 1638)† "built the first house of public wor-

* Winthrop. "The Braintree Company" probably took its name from a village in England, near Chelmsford, where Mr. Hooker preached for several years. His eloquence and popularity were such that people flocked from all parts of the neighbouring country to hear him.

† Its name was then altered to Cambridge "in compliment to the place where so many of the civil and clerical fathers of New England had received their education. There were, probably, at that time,

ship with a bell upon it." This house, we are told, stood about thirty rods south of the spot on which we are now assembled. At this distance of time there is little information to be obtained concerning it; especially as the church records previous to the time of Mr. Brattle, who was settled in 1696, have been by some unfortunate accident lost or destroyed. We learn from other sources that a church (the eighth of the New-England churches) was first gathered in the new meeting-house, and a pastor settled, in the autumn of 1633. On Friday, the 11th of October of that year, Thomas Hooker was ordained as pastor, and Samuel Stone as teacher, of the congregation at Newtown. The autumn of the present year therefore completed just two centuries since the gathering of the first church of Christ in this town, the ordination of a settled ministry, and the commencement of the regular preaching of the Gospel in the first lowly temple built by our fathers. Mr. Hooker remained here but a short time. In consequence of the smallness of the township, as originally laid out, and the want of sufficient land for the purposes of agriculture and pasturage, he and his people soon became dissatisfied with their situation, and finally obtained permission from the General Court to remove in a body to Connecticut, on condition of their remain-

forty or fifty sons of the university of Cambridge in Old England,—one for every two hundred or two hundred and fifty inhabitants,—dwelling in the few villages of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The sons of Oxford were not few."—Savage's *Note upon Winthrop*. Vol. I. p. 265.

ing under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. They left Cambridge in June, 1636; and, after a fortnight's journey on foot, at length reached the place of their destination, where they built a town, which they at first called Newtown, afterwards Hartford. Before their departure they had disposed of their houses and lands to another company, who had arrived from England, the autumn previous, with "the faithful and famous Shepard" their future pastor. On the 1st of February, 1636, a new church was organized here with much form and solemnity in the place of that which was about to remove; and Mr. Shepard was soon after ordained as its pastor.

This pious, faithful, and simple-hearted servant of Christ, after a devoted and successful ministry of thirteen years, died August 25, 1649, at the age of forty-four. He was succeeded in the ministry by Jonathan Mitchell, who was ordained August 21, 1650. — It was about the time of his settlement that the second church was erected, somewhere near the spot on which we are now worshipping. It appears from the ancient town records * that a vote had been passed in February, 1650, to repair the old meeting-house; but, on farther consideration, it was determined at a subsequent meeting in March to build a new one "about forty feet square" and "covered with shingle." It was also then voted and generally agreed that "the new meeting-house shall stand on the Watch-House Hill;" the same eminence, it is supposed, on which the house in which we are now assembled is placed. The

* See Appendix, Note B.

second church must have been completed, and the old one removed, in the course of the year 1650 or 1651 ; as we find a vote of the town passed in February, 1652, “ that the Townsmen * shall make sale of the land whereon the old meeting-house stood.”

It appears, then, that the first house of worship erected for the use of our fathers of this society was occupied only eighteen years. It was probably a small and humble edifice, accommodated to the numbers and means of the early settlers. In other and more important respects, however, — in the piety of those who worshipped beneath its lowly roof, in the devotion, industry, talents, and fame of those who ministered at its altar, — the glory of that ancient house is not likely to be surpassed. It was in that house that Thomas Hooker,† afterwards “ the Renowned Pastor of Hartford church, and Pillar of Connecticut colony,” and one of the most eminent preachers ‡ of his day, commenced his ministerial labours in New England. — It was in that house that Thomas Shepard, called by one of his cotemporaries “ that gracious, sweete, heavenly-minded, and soule-ravishing minister,” whose solemn, impressive, and melting delivery

* The Selectmen.

† A fuller account, which did not come within the plan or the limits of this discourse, of Hooker, Shepard and their successors in the ministry, may be found in Dr. Holmes’s History of Cambridge, where he gives a distinct biography of each. The well known accuracy and thoroughness of my respected predecessor leave little to be done by one who comes after him.

‡ See Appendix, Note C.

seems to have produced a great effect on all who heard him, and whose writings, now almost unknown and forgotten, were once in high estimation, — preached to the little flock who had accompanied him in his exile and shared with him the dangers of the great sea. — It was in that house that Jonathan Mitchell, another of the most eminent and influential clergymen of New England, — a man universally beloved, esteemed, and admired for his talents and learning as well as for his eloquence, wisdom, and piety, — began his labours; and his lips no doubt spoke the words of farewell when our fathers left it for their second temple.

There are some other historical recollections connected with the first meeting-house which deserve to be noticed. It was in that house that the two most famous synods of New England were convened; the first, in 1637, for the exposure, condemnation, and suppression of Antinomian doctrines, introduced by Mrs. Hutchinson and her followers; and the other which, in 1648,* after continued meetings and discussions for nearly two years, finally adopted the Platform of Church-Discipline, called “The Cambridge Platform,” which was for a long time the acknowledged rule of ecclesiastical discipline among the greater part of the churches of New England. It was in that house too, I believe, that the first commencement of Harvard College, and of course the first in America, was celebrated on the second Tuesday of August, 1642; when the governor, magistrates, and ministers,

* See Appendix, Note, D.

with a great concourse of people from all parts, joyfully assembled to witness the triumphs of Christian learning on a spot which a few years before had been the abode of the untutored Indian.

These are some of the interesting facts connected with the history of the first house of worship in this place, which make its short life of eighteen years a memorable one in the eyes of lovers of the past. The minute circumstances relating to its size, materials, and architecture, we have now no means of ascertaining; nor indeed have they any importance or interest except as matters of antiquarian curiosity. There is one fact however, with regard to the mode in which people were once summoned to public worship in it, which happens to have come down to us, and which though trivial in itself may be worth mentioning on this occasion.

It appears that, at one time, for some reason now unknown, the bell (which, as we learn from Prince, whose words I have quoted to you, and also from the town records, was at first used to call the people together) was either removed, or became unfit for service, and a *drum* was substituted in its place; — a fit emblem, methinks, of the early times of New England, when the sounds of worship and of war were so often blended together; when the hymn of the Pilgrim, as it rose upon the stillness of the Sabbath, was sometimes mingled with the battle-cry of his Indian foe. The fact which I have mentioned, the use of a drum instead of a bell, is confirmed by the town records, in which we find an order from the select-

men (in 1646)* for the payment of a man "for his service to the town in beating the drum." We learn it incidentally also from a singular story in Johnson's "Wonder-working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England." † As this story is, on several accounts, a curious one, I shall repeat it as nearly as possible in the language of the historian. In "the dismal yeare of sixteen hundred thirty-six," a person who had lately come over to New-England, hoping to find the true doctrine of Christ preached there, "was incountered at his first landing with some of the Errorists" of that time, viz. Mrs. Hutchinson and her disciples. "When he saw the good old way of Christ rejected by them, and he could not skill in that new light, which was the common theame of every man's discourse, hee betooke him to a narrow Indian path, in which his serious meditations soone led him, where none but senseless trees and echoing rocks make answer to his heart-easeing mone. 'O,' quoth he, 'where am I become. Is this the place where those Reverend Preachers are fled, that Christ was pleased to make use of to rouse up his rich graces in many a drooping soule? Here have I met with some that tell mee, I must take a *naked* Christ.' — But 'what is the whole life of a Christian upon this earth, but through the power of Christ to die to sinne, and live to holinesse and righteousness, and for that end to

* "5 (9) 1646. It is ordered by y^e Townsmen that there shall be fifty shillings payde unto Tho. Longhorne for his service to y^e Towne in beateing y^e Drum this two years last past."

† Chapter XLIII.

be diligent in the use of *meanes*.' At the uttering of this word he starts up from the greene bed of his complaint, with resolution to hear some one of these able ministers preach (whom report had so valued) before his will should make choyce of any one principle, though of crossing the broad seas back againe. Then turning his face to the Sun, he steered his course toward the next Town, and after some small travell hee came to a large plaine. No sooner was he entered thereon, but hearing the sound of a Drum he was directed toward it by a broad beaten way. Following this rode he demands of the next man he met what the signall of the drum meant. The reply was made they had as yet no Bell to call men to meeting ; and therefore made use of a Drum. 'Who is it,' quoth he, 'lectures at this Towne.' The other replies, 'I see you are a stranger new come over, seeing you know not the man. It is one Mr. Shepheard.' 'Verily,' quoth the other, 'you hit the right, I am new come over indeed, and have been told since I came most of your ministers are legall preachers, onely if I mistake not they told me this man preached a finer covenant of workes than the other. But however, I shall make what haste I can to heare him. Fare you well.' Then hasting thither hee croudeth through the thickest, where having stayed while the glasse* was turned up twice, the

* The hour-glass. It was anciently the custom to have an hour glass by the side of the preacher, which he turned up on beginning his sermon, that he might know the length of his preaching. A modern audience would hardly tolerate a preacher, even were he a second Shepard, who should often "turne up the glasse twice."

man was metamorphosed, and was faine to hang down the head often, least his watery eyes should blab abroad the secret conjunction of his affections, his heart crying loud to the Lord's ecchoing answer, to his blessed spirit, that caused the speech of a poore, weake, pale-complectioned man to take such impression in his soule, by applying the word so aptly, as if hee had beene his privy Counsellor, cleering Christ's worke of grace in the soule from all those false doctrines, which the erronious party had afrighted him withall; and now he resolves (the Lord willing) to live and die with the Ministers of New England, whom hee now saw the Lord had not onely made zealous to stand for the truth of his Discipline, but also of his Doctrine, and not to give ground one inch."

The second meeting-house was built, as I have already mentioned, about the time of Mr Mitchell's settlement in 1650; and enjoyed the ministrations of that highly-gifted and holy man for eighteen years. In the summer of 1668, just after preaching on the words, "I know that thou wilt bring me to death and unto the house appointed for all the living," he was suddenly seized with a fever which proved fatal. He died July 9, 1668, in the forty-third year of his age. He was succeeded, after an interval of three years, (during a part of which time President Chauncy supplied the pulpit,) by Urian Oakes, a graduate of Harvard, but afterwards settled in England, his native country, whither he had returned soon after leaving college in 1649. His high reputation induced the church and society

to send out a messenger to England to invite him to become their pastor. He accepted their invitation, and was installed in 1671. In 1675 he was chosen to the presidency of Harvard College, and continued to perform the duties of that office in conjunction with those of his ministry until his sudden death by a fever, July 25, 1681, in the fiftieth year of his age. Mr. Oakes was distinguished for his abilities and acquirements; for his pleasing eloquence; and for the uncommon mildness and modesty which adorned his character through life. The next who officiated in the pulpit of the second meeting-house was Nathaniel Gookin; whose history and character seem now to be almost as obscure as the obliterated inscription on the tombstone which tradition has pointed out as his in our ancient burying-ground. We can learn little more of him than that he was a graduate of Harvard, was an assistant in the pulpit of Mr. Oakes after he was called to the presidency, was ordained November 15, 1682, and died August 7, 1692, in the thirty-fourth year of his age, and tenth of his ministry.* From this time until 1696 the pulpit continued vacant. The society at length made choice of William Brattle, who accepted their call, and was ordained Nov. 25, 1696. He was the last of the four preachers who ministered in the second meeting-house. It was taken down in 1706, after having stood fifty-six years.

* His father was Major-general Gookin, a distinguished inhabitant of Cambridge, the friend of the Indians, and the assistant of Eliot in his labours for their conversion.

In the town records for 1705, I find the following votes relating to the erection of the third church : —
 “At a Meeting of y^e Inhabitants belonging to the Old Meeting-house in Cambridge orderly convened y^e 6th December 1705. ‘Voted, that y^e sum of two hundred and eighty Pounds be Levied on s^d Inhabitants towards y^e Building a New Meeting-house amongst them.’ ‘Also Voted that y^e committee appointed by s^d Inhabitants 12th July 1703, viz. The Hon^{ble} Andrew Belcher, Tho^s Brattle, John Leverett, Fra^s Foxcroft, Esq^{rs}, Dea. Walter Hasting, Capt. Tho^s Oliver, and M^r W^m Russell, together with M^r Edm^d Goffe being joyn’d to s^d Committee instead of Dea. Walter Hasting deceased agree with some suitable person or persons to build s^d Meeting house and inspect y^e workmen that so said Building may be done in good workmanlike order.’” In pursuance of these votes the third meeting-house was built in 1706 a little in front of this. The first Sabbath service was performed in it December 13, 1706. In this house Mr. Brattle officiated until his death, February 15, 1717. He was greatly beloved and esteemed by his people and by the whole community. His manner of preaching (as described by Dr. Colman) was “calm, soft, and melting.” “They that had the happiness to know Mr. Brattle,” says another, “knew a very religious good man, an able divine, a laborious faithful minister, an excellent scholar, a great benefactor, a wise and prudent man, and one of the best of friends.” — Mr. Brattle was succeeded in 1717 by Nathaniel Appleton, whose ministry is one of the longest and most

successful on record. The meeting-house, in which he was ordained, and which was nearly new at the time of his settlement, proved to be of frailer materials than its youthful pastor. He outlived it about thirty years. It was taken down in 1757, and the materials (as appears from votes of the town and parish) were given by the parish towards the erection of the court-house, which is still standing, and likely to stand for many years to come. Whether any part of the materials of the old church was actually used for this purpose, or whether they were sold, and the proceeds applied to defray the expense of building that house, I am not informed.

The house, in which we are now worshipping for the last time, and which is the fourth erected for the use of our parish, was raised November 17, 1756; and was first occupied for public worship July 24, 1757. There are still living among us four individuals, who were baptized by Dr. Appleton in the old meeting-house which stood in front of this. Three of them are members of this society; one of whom was the last person baptised in that house, on the last Sabbath on which public worship was attended in it, July 17, 1757. The rest are in the grave, and the places that knew them, know them no more. So will it be with us. O God, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Let the remembrance of death keep us from sloth and sin; and quicken us in the performance of our duty to thee, and to the friends whom we must soon leave.

There are none, I believe, of the individuals to whom I have alluded who have a distinct recollection of the pulling down of the old house, or of the building of the new ; so that the words of the text may be applied with almost literal propriety on the present occasion, " Who is left among you that saw this house in her *first* glory ? "

With the names and characters of the pastors who have successively officiated in this pulpit, most of you, I presume, are already acquainted. Dr. Appleton, whom I have already mentioned as the first in order, is remembered with affectionate veneration by many who are still left among us. He lived to the great age of 91, and retained his faculties in a remarkable degree till the last year of his life. I find a record in his own handwriting of several baptisms performed by him in public as well as at his own house, in 1783, the year before his death. But the crooked lines and the blurred and trembling characters betray the infirmities of the aged pastor. Dr. Appleton was very happily qualified for his office. His unfeigned seriousness and piety, the integrity and simplicity of his character, his wisdom and moderation, his active benevolence, his hospitality, courtesy, and kindness, together with his apostolic and patriarchal appearance and manners, gave him an almost unbounded influence over his people. With a competent share of the learning of his time he united strong common sense and a practical cast of mind which made his preaching profitable to his hearers. His discourses were marked with a pithy plainness of expression,

and a colloquial familiarity of language and illustration, which might sound strangely in a modern pulpit; but "the application was so pertinent, and his utterance and air so solemn, as to suppress levity and silence criticism." Towards those who differed from him in religious opinions, "he was candid and catholic. 'Orthodoxy and Charity' were his motto, and he happily exemplified the union of both in his ministry and in his life." * — On the 27th of October, 1783, the Rev. Timothy Hilliard, formerly minister of Barnstable, was installed as colleague with Dr. Appleton, who died the following February, after a ministry of sixty-seven years among this people. Mr. Hilliard died on the 9th of May, 1790, in the 44th year of his age, and the seventh of his ministry in Cambridge. He is remembered with much respect and affection by those of his congregation who are yet living, as a kind and faithful pastor, a serious and practical † preacher, and a most amiable and exemplary man. — He was succeeded by the Rev. Abiel Holmes, who was installed January 25, 1792, and continued minister of this parish, until the unhappy religious dissen-

* Dr. Holmes's *History of Cambridge*. His portrait by Copley, now in the possession of Mrs. Appleton of this town, represents him holding a volume of Watts entitled "Orthodoxy and Charity."

† "He was not frequent in handling subjects of doubtful disputation. To inculcate repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and a hearty conformity to the practical precepts of the Gospel he considered of the first importance; and such was the general tenor of his preaching." Like his predecessor, Dr. Appleton, "he was ready to embrace all good men though their religious opinions might in many respects differ from his." — President Willard's *Sermon at the Funeral of Mr. Hilliard*.

sions, which have shaken the land for the last twenty years, led to a separation in 1829; an event greatly regretted by his old parishioners, to whom he had ministered in so long and happy a union, and among whom there is but one feeling of esteem and affection towards their former pastor. The present pastor was ordained May 19, 1830.

It appears from this statement that there have been two pastors of our church and society installed, and one ordained, in this house since its erection. The number of admissions to the church during the same period has been 476; of public baptisms, 1389; of which nearly one half were performed by Dr. Appleton during the last twenty-seven years of his ministry. Six of the sixteen Presidents of our University have been inaugurated in this place; and the oldest living graduate, the Hon. Paine Wingate of Stratham, New Hampshire, who stands on the catalogue a lonely survivor amidst the starred names of the dead, took his degree within these walls.

There are some other reminiscences connected with it, which give it an added interest and distinction. It was here that our beloved Washington, during his encampment at Cambridge in 1775, worshipped God in the Sabbath assembly, and with his brother-patriots in arms acknowledged his dependence on the Lord of Hosts with that piety which marked the character of our ancestors, and was ever conspicuous in that of the Father of our country. It was here that Lafayette, the surviving apostle of freedom, on his triumphal visit to our land, was so eloquently welcomed. It was in this

house also that in 1779 a State Convention, composed of delegates from the several towns of the Commonwealth, framed the Constitution of Massachusetts. This house then carries back our thoughts to many events and scenes of a political and academical as well as religious interest. There is, probably, no one now standing, in which so many of the distinguished men of New England, if not of the whole country, have, at one time or another, on the Sabbath or on other occasions, been present. Its antiquated construction and even some of its discomforts have their interest to the eyes of many, as they are associated with recollections of former days, or of the times of their youth. It is one of the simple but substantial structures, of which there are a few still remaining here and there, in defiance of time, the unclassical specimens of our homely New-England church architecture of the past century ; and, in their durability and plainness, both the monuments and the emblems of the generation by which they were erected. And now, having reached the good old age of seventy-seven years, and twice seven days, -- having withstood the winds and the rains, the snows and the suns of so many changing seasons, having outlived almost all who saw it in its first glory, it is no longer to bear witness to our vows and prayers in the solemn assembly. We are met here for the last time. Antiquated and uncomfortable as it now is, to many of my hearers it has been endeared by early associations and domestic remembrances, as well as by religious feel-

ing ; and, in leaving it even for a more comely and convenient edifice, there are some who cannot but feel a kind of sadness like that with which we leave our father's home, the home of our youth. Many tender and solemn recollections rise upon their minds in the softened light of the past. "Here" says one, "my young mind received the glad news of the kingdom of God, and was awakened to a sense of its immortal nature, and its nobler duties. Here my good resolutions were stirred into life, and I determined to live as a Christian, and a child of God. Here my doubts and my anxieties were hushed into silence by communion with the Father, and by the cheering words of his truth falling from the lips of the preacher upon my open heart. Here my worldly desires, my worldly principles were rebuked ; and better motives and higher objects impressed upon my soul." "Here," says another, "I sat for many happy years with friends now no more ; — and, with them, enjoyed the pleasures of a devotion made holier by Christian sympathy. Here I dedicated my offspring to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here I celebrated the dying love of my Saviour, and gained new strength to follow him through the various duties and trials of life. Here my devotional feelings have been renewed and strengthened from Sabbath to Sabbath, as I have mused in these familiar seats on the works and the word of God." — Thoughts like these must be passing through the minds of all who have worshipped in this place. We part from it as we do from an old friend. And

in parting from it, may God forgive us the sins which we have here committed in this His sanctuary ; — forgive us our cold prayers, and the wandering, worldly thoughts which have too often mingled themselves with the religious meditations of the Sabbath ; — forgive us the half-formed or broken vows which we have here made ; — forgive us the low motives which have sometimes brought us to His house, and the unsanctified feelings with which we have sometimes listened to its services. — As we go hence, may we depart with a determination to make a better use than we have here done of our religious privileges ; to dedicate our own souls to God, while we dedicate a new temple to His service ; and to walk before Him in all his ordinances, holy and blameless.

And now, in the name of my brethren, I bid farewell to this house, sanctified and endeared to us by recollections of the past ; the place, where departed friends have worshipped, where our own souls have ascended to God, where the good and the great of the land have been gathered, where the Father of our country prayed to the God of hosts in the time of our country's trial. We bid its well-known seats, its familiar walls, the worshippers' farewell.

A P P E N D I X .

NOTE A.

UPON Mr. Hooker's removal to Hartford in 1636, Mr. Dudley removed to Ipswich. He afterwards fixed his residence in Roxbury, where he died in 1653. He was a man of strong passions, rigid in his notions of discipline and government, and, like many of the early settlers, intolerant in his religious sentiments; but withal a man of great worth, integrity, and piety. The account in Winthrop of the misunderstanding and disputes which took place between him and Dudley, (partly in consequence of the Governor's removing his house from Cambridge) illustrates the different characters of the two fathers of Massachusetts. Mr. Dudley's "firm and robust constitution and vigorous mind, and his civil and military accomplishments rendered him conspicuously useful in the arduous enterprise in which he and his associates were engaged. He should be remembered with reverence and esteem though there may be some features of undue severity in his character. In his dread of toleration he was far from being alone. It was the prevailing temper of his age." "The verses following," says Morton, "were found in his pocket after his death, which may further illustrate his character, and give a taste of his poetical fancy; wherein it is said he did excel."

"Dim eyes, deaf ears, cold stomach shew
My dissolution is in view.
Eleven times seven near lived have I,
And now God calls, I willing die.
My shuttle's shot, my race is run,
My sun is set, my day is done.
My span is measured, tale is told,
My flower is faded and grown old.

My dream is vanished, shadow 's fled,
 My soul with Christ, my body dead.
 Farewell dear wife, children and friends,
 Hate heresy, make blessed ends.
 Bear poverty, live with good men,
 So shall we live with joy again.
Let men of God in courts and churches watch,
Over such as do a toleration hatch,
 Lest that ill egg bring forth a cockatrice,
 To poison all with heresy and vice.
 If men be left and otherwise combine,
 My Epitaph 's, *I died no Libertine."*

The dread of heresy and toleration here expressed was not peculiar to Dudley. Most of the early settlers of Massachusetts were opposed to an entire freedom of religious opinion and worship. "The men of God in Court and Church" wrote and spoke against toleration for some time after Mr. Dudley's death. Mr. Mitchell, in his Election Sermon at Cambridge in 1667, condemns a "licentious toleration", as he calls it, and Mr. Oakes speaks still more strongly against it in a discourse upon the same occasion a few years after. There are some lines however of Mitchell, preserved in Mather, which are sufficiently catholic for any age. They are from an elegy on President Dunster, whose heretical opinions on the subject of baptism had finally obliged him to resign his office. The lines to which I allude, from the pen of one of the earliest and most distinguished pastors of our church, are worth transcribing for the sentiment, if not for the poetry; though in this last respect they are quite equal to most of the doggerel written at that time, when rhyming seems to have been the fashion of the day among ministers as well as laymen. I therefore subjoin them.

Where faith in Jesus is sincere,
 That soul he saving pardoneth;
 What wants and errors else be there
 That may and do consist therewith.

And though we be imperfect here,
 And in one mind can't often meet,
 Who know in part, in part may err,
 Though faith be one, all do not see 't;

Yet may we once the rest obtain
 In everlasting bliss above,
 Where Christ with perfect saints doth reign,
 In perfect light and perfect love;

Then shall we all like-minded be,
 Faith's unity is there full-grown ;
 There one truth all both love and see
 And thence are perfect made in one.

There Luther both and Zuinglius,
 Ridley and Hooper there agree ;
 There all the truly righteous
 Sans feud live to eternity.

NOTE B.

The following are the votes, relating to the erection of the second house of worship, as taken from the town records ;

" At a general meeting of the inhabitants of the town 18. 12. 49. *

" Voted and agreed by a general consent that the meeting house shall be repaired with a 4 : square rooffe and covered with shingle, and the charges thereof levied upon the Inhabitants of the towne by equall rate. Also Edw : Goffe, Tho : Marrett, Jno. Stedman, Robt. Holmes, and Tho : Danforth, are chosen by the towne to oversee and carry on this worke, to agree with workmen, and to levie the charge of their ingagements for the worke, upon the Inhabitants of the towne."

" 11th (1) mo. 1649-50. At a general meeting of the whole Towne, it was then voted and agreed that the five men chosen by the Towne to repayre the meeting house shall desist from the same and agree with workmen for the building of a new house, about forty foot square, and covered as was formerly agreed for the other, and levy the charge of their ingagements upon the Inhabitants of the Towne. — It was also then voted and generally agreed that the new meeting house shall stand on the Watch house hill."

NOTE C.

An anecdote, related by Winthrop and Mather, of the preaching of Mr. Hooker in his old meeting-house at Cambridge, in 1639, while on a visit to Massachusetts, is somewhat curious. " On May 26, 1639,

* That is, the 18th of the 12th month, 1649 ; or, according to modern reckoning, the 18th of February, 1650. The year anciently begun on the 25th of March This was called the first month and February the twelfth.

Mr. Hooker being here to preach that Lord's day in the afternoon, his great fame had gathered a vast multitude of hearers from several other congregations, and among the rest the Governor * himself to be made partaker of his ministry. But when he came to preach, he found himself so unaccountably at a loss, that after some shattered and broken attempts to proceed, he made a full stop, saying to the assembly, "that every thing which he would have spoken was taken out of his mouth, and out of his mind also." Wherefore he desired them to sing a psalm, while he withdrew about half an hour from them. Returning then to the congregation he preached a most admirable sermon, wherein he held them for *two hours* together in an extraordinary strain of pertinency and vivacity." — Mather's *Magnalia*.

NOTE D.

The following notice from Winthrop of the final meeting of this synod, and of a little incident which took place in the meeting-house, is illustrative of the spirit of the times. "15 (6) (15 August). The Synod met at Cambridge by adjournment from June last. Mr. Allen of Dedham preached out of Acts xv. a very godly, learned, and particular handling of near all the doctrines and applications concerning that subject, with a clear discovery and refutation of such errors, objections, and scruples as had been raised about it by the young heads in the country. It fell out, about the midst of his sermon, there came a snake into the seat where many of the elders sate behind the preacher. It came in at the door where people stood thick upon the stairs. Divers of the elders shifted from it, but Mr. Thompson, one of the elders of Braintree (a man of much faith), trode upon the head of it, and so held it with his foot and staff with a small pair of grains until it was killed. *This being so remarkable*, and nothing falling out but by Divine Providence, it is out of doubt, the Lord discovered somewhat of his mind in it. The serpent is the devil, the synod the representative of the churches of Christ in New England. The devil had formerly and lately attempted their disturbance and dissolution; but their faith in the seed of the woman overcame him and crushed his head." — Savage's *edition of Winthrop*, Vol. II. p. 330.

* His attendance on this occasion shows the high estimation in which Mr. Hooker was held as a preacher; — as "the Governor (to use his own words) did very seldom go from his own congregation on the Lord's day."

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED

AT THE DEDICATION

OF THE

N E W M E E T I N G H O U S E

FOR THE USE

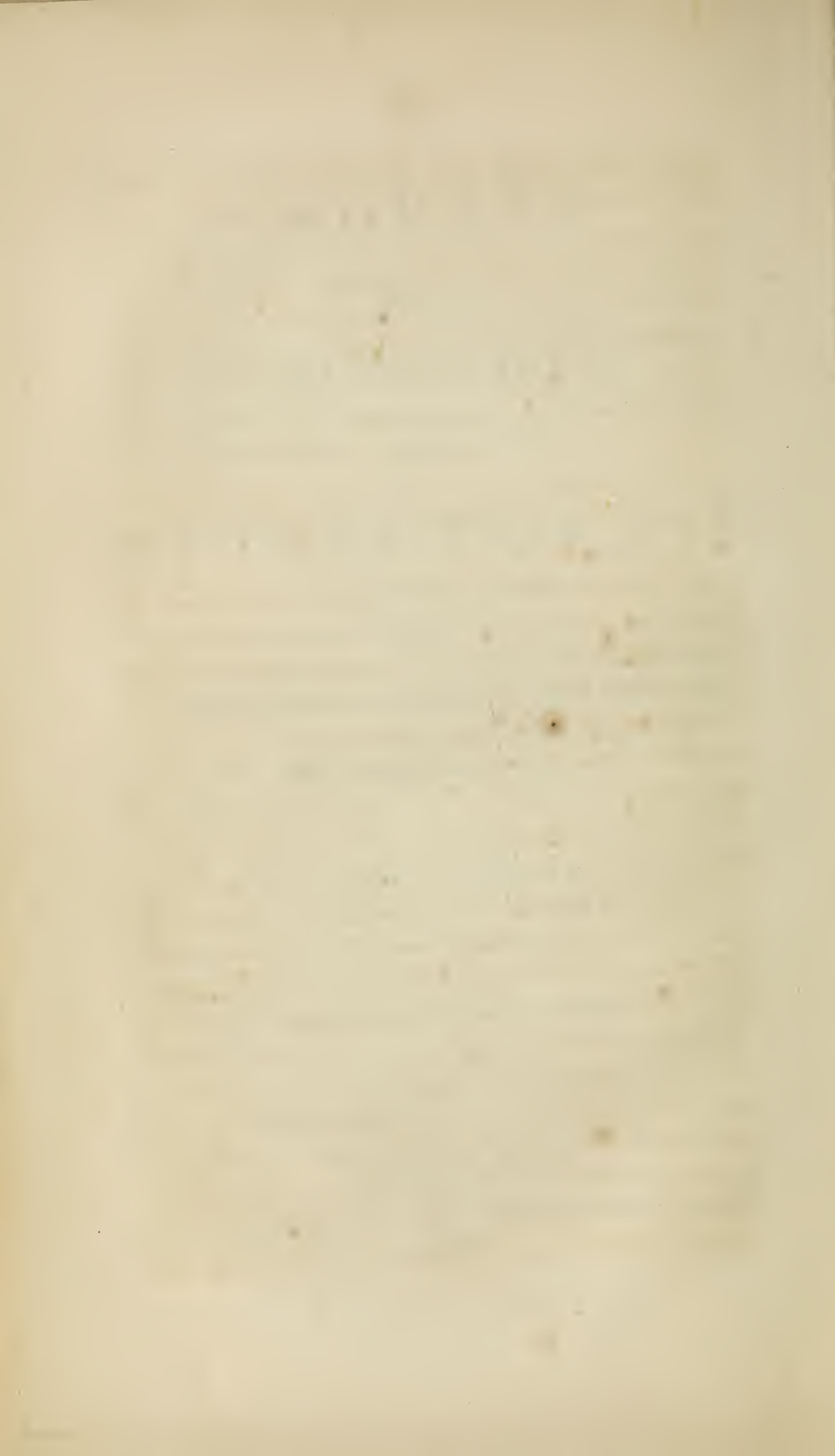
OF THE FIRST PARISH IN CAMBRIDGE,

On Thursday, Dec. 12, 1833.

BY WILLIAM NEWELL,
PASTOR OF THE SOCIETY.

Printed by Request of the Society.

CAMBRIDGE:
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.
1834.



DISCOURSE.

GENESIS, xxviii. 17.

This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.

It is true — we learn it from the Gospel of Christ, as well as from the teachings of reason — that “God who made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands ;” — that He does not confine the influences of his Spirit within the walls of any earthly sanctuary ; — that “His temple is all space, His altar, earth, sea, skies ;” — and that every part of His boundless dominion is filled with the glories of His power, and the brighter splendors of His goodness. We learn it from the Gospel of Christ, as well as from the teachings of reason, that God’s eye of holiness and love is looking down upon us in the closet, where we pray to Him in secret, no less than in the public assembly ; — that “He is not far from every one of us, since in Him we live, and move, and have our being ;” — that it is only by faith, by an act of the mind, not of the body, that we bring ourselves into His presence ; — that to the

holy all places are holy ; — and that Jesus, when he lifted up his eyes to Heaven in the open fields of Judea, was heard with no less acceptance than when he spake and worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem. But, true as this is, it is equally true that, as men, as finite beings, creatures of sense, we all need certain times and places and forms to aid us in the fit expression and exercise of devout feelings ; and that when such feelings have been repeatedly awakened in certain places, at certain times, by certain forms, they at length become strongly associated with each other in our minds, so that these outward circumstances have power to suggest and renew those inward affections and thoughts with which they have been so often connected, while, on the other hand, the sacredness, which belongs in fact only to the subject and the sentiment, is transferred in some degree by association to the spot and the occasion. This one obvious consideration, independent of all others, is sufficient to show, — if, indeed, it be not too plain to need any proof, — that it is not superstition, but the sound philosophy of the heart, which hallows and sets apart to religious uses some chosen place where, from Sabbath to Sabbath, God may be worshipped, His character and providence made known, the religion of the Saviour preached, defended, explained, and enforced ; where, from Sabbath to Sabbath, we may assemble with our families and friends, and publicly acknowledge our common dependence upon the Almighty Father and our accountability to His laws.

For this purpose have we erected the house in which we are to-day met for the first time : — and we are now assembled according to ancient and appropriate usage to dedicate it to the worship of God and the teaching of Christianity. From the earliest times it has been customary to set apart the temples of the Lord by some special ceremony to the uses for which they were erected. This ceremony, like all others, has had its abuses and perversions. It has been made, in some countries, an occasion of priestly pomp, or of superstitious mummary. But, in the *principle* on which it is founded, it must approve itself to the feelings and the judgment of all ; and when observed, as it commonly has been among us, it can be objected to only by those who are disposed to cavil at *all* forms however natural and simple. It is hardly necessary to say to any here present, that by this act of dedication we do not expect to invest these walls with any mystic and peculiar sanctity such as they would not have without it ; — such as to make the prayers and vows of the worshipper more acceptable to God than if they were offered up in any other place with that spirit of faith, which alone can hallow them. The ceremony in which we now engage is simply a public and solemn declaration of the purposes for which this house has been built and to which it is hereafter to be appropriated ; and a public and solemn expression of our dependence upon God, whose presence and blessing we now invoke for the successful accomplishment of those purposes.

To what purposes, then, and in what spirit, are we now, as Christians, to dedicate this house?

We dedicate it in the first place to the worship of the only living and true God; the King eternal, immortal, invisible; the Maker of heaven and of earth; the Preserver and Ruler of the universe; the Governor of angels and of men; the centre and the source of life, knowledge, happiness; the all-powerful, all-wise, all-holy, all-merciful, all-good; whose tender mercies are over all his works, all his creatures, in the punishments of hell, as well as in the rewards of heaven; our greatest Benefactor, our everlasting Friend; on whom we depend for life, breath, and all things; by whose power, every moment exerted, we are preserved in being; by whose goodness, ever operating, we are surrounded with privileges and enjoyments; by whose providence all events are so ordered as to produce the greatest amount of happiness to each and to all; — the heart-searching Witness, and righteous Judge, to whom we are accountable for the deeds done in the body; whose will it is our highest wisdom to learn, to do, and to bear; whose favor is better than life, whose displeasure is more to be feared than death; — to sum up all in a few comprehensive names, our Father in Heaven, — the Father of Lights, — the Father of our immortal spirits, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To this glorious and good Being we would henceforth unitedly offer in this place the sacrifices of love and faith; of thanksgiving for his mercies; of supplication for his pardon and guidance; and of

intercession for His blessing upon our friends, our fellow-citizens, our fellow-Christians, our brethren of every name and nation under heaven.

Secondly, we dedicate this house to the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe that he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God ; that he was divinely authorized and empowered to teach us the most important of all truths ; the character of the Supreme Being, the principles of His government, the conditions of His forgiveness, our relations to Him, our duty, our destination, our true happiness, the great objects of the present life and its connexion with the life to come. We believe that he was sent by the Father upon the most sublime and benevolent mission which was ever entrusted to any being who has appeared upon this earth ; that he came to promote the everlasting happiness of the whole human family ; that he came to educate us for God and for eternity, to qualify us for the nearer presence and enjoyment and service of the All-Holy Spirit, and for the exalted delights and duties of the second and of all future states of existence. We believe that by obedience to the laws of his Gospel, which are the laws of eternal right and eternal excellence, that by manifesting the spirit, forming the character, living the life which he taught and exemplified, we are saved, are made happy, are formed to the image of God, and prepared for the bliss of heaven. We believe that the principles and influences of his religion are, in the course of events, and according to the laws of

Divine Providence and of the human mind, to become yet more powerful, to spread from nation to nation, to reign over the hearts of mankind at some now distant age, and thus to establish the true and only Millenium, when God in his spirit shall establish his abode with men, and Christ in his gospel shall become the King and the Saviour of the whole earth. We believe that this Gospel has within itself the elements of progress ; that as it opens to our view objects of pursuit and imitation, which are of an infinite character, as it is free from all those peculiarities and temporary and local forms which would limit its influence to any one age or nation, it will, in every advancing stage of human improvement, be still in advance of the human mind. We believe that Christianity is fitted and designed to promote the best interests of society as well as of individuals ; and that in proportion as a community are penetrated with a sense of its value and truth, and are generally enlightened by its quickening doctrines and sanctified by its moral power, in the same proportion will that community be free, prosperous, peaceful and happy. We believe in short that " the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world ; " — the Saviour of the world by his teaching, his example, and the various influences of that Gospel, which he sealed with his blood upon the cross. — We acknowledge it, then, to be the great duty and privilege of all in every station, be they ministers or laymen, to do what in them lies for the support and propagation of this Gospel ; for fixing its prin-

ciples in their own minds and hearts, and for communicating them to others ; and thus to be fellow-workers with God and Christ in sanctifying and saving immortal souls.

We therefore solemnly dedicate this house to the service of Christianity ; to the preaching of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come. Here may the truths of the Gospel, its precepts, its promises, its warnings, its motives, and its sanctions be proclaimed with faithfulness and simplicity ; be received with attentive and understanding minds ; and bring forth the abundant fruits of holiness and peace.

But in dedicating this house to the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the Son of God and the spiritual Saviour of man, it is well known that our views concerning the nature of Christ and the doctrines of his Gospel differ from those which are held by many of our fellow-Christians. Christianity, as *we* understand it, has been and is still connected with many and great errors. — Though it was established in the world by miraculous power, it was not exempted from the common influences and ordinary laws which regulate the course of events in the moral world. The good seed of the word was planted by the hand of God ; but left to grow free and wild in the great field of human nature. It did grow and flourish, till it spread over the earth. But it was not preserved by a perpetual miracle from the changes and corruptions, to which all truth is liable in its transmission from one mind to another, and from one age

and nation to another. Hence, as might be expected, it has been often disfigured and darkened in its progress through past ages by the false philosophy of the times; and is still, as we think, incrustated with errors of doctrine which grew up and gathered about it in the earlier and darker ages of the church. With the Reformation, indeed, we date a new and glorious era in the history of our religion, when the principles of religious liberty, the right of free inquiry, and the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a standard of faith and practice, began to be understood and recognised. But the Reformation only commenced the work, which is yet to be completed. The Reformers were fallible men like ourselves. We would follow them only so far as they followed Christ. Our Puritan fathers, much as their memory is to be venerated, were fallible men like ourselves. And we would follow *them*, only so far as they followed Christ. We receive only those doctrines, which, with our means of information, and according to our best judgment, appear to us the doctrines of Scripture and reason; and all others we reject, however venerable may be the names and the characters of those by whom they may have been held in past times. We trust that, were they now living, they would be willing to "receive farther light than that which they at first received;" and that in the world of spirits, where they enjoy the society and the instructions of Jesus, they have already received it.

A sounder philosophy, a more enlightened criticism, juster views of Scriptural interpretation,

deeper researches into ecclesiastical history, together with the general advancement of all the branches of human knowledge, have thrown new lights upon the truths of religion. We enjoy greater advantages than our predecessors, and those who follow us will enjoy greater advantages than the men of this age, for farther progress. We therefore rejoice in the hope that religious knowledge will continue to advance, as it has hitherto done, and that men's views of God and of their relations to Him will become more clear, and more spiritual, and that this is more likely to be the case in our own country, where the people are generally well informed, and there are no unnatural restraints upon free inquiry and the independent expression of opinion, than in the old world. But even here in the freest state of society, the truth as it is in Jesus, if it differ, as we are convinced it does, from those systems of doctrine which have been generally received, has still many obstacles to encounter. It must contend with ignorance and prejudice ; with misunderstanding and misrepresentation ; with the apathy of the indifferent, and the backwardness of the temporizing ; with conscientious opposition and interested hostility ; with the errors of early education, which linger about the minds of the best men, and often make them violent, though well-meaning, opposers of new doctrines ; and with wrong principles of reasoning, wrong methods of studying the Scriptures, and wrong maxims of interpretation, which, as long as they prevail, must remain a fatal bar to the understand-

ing and reception of just views of Christianity. These are but a part of the many obstacles which lie in the way of religious truth, when it is at variance with received opinions. I have mentioned them only to show that we are called to exert ourselves in its defence and promotion. We are solemnly bound by our duty to God, to our Master, to our fellow-men, to expose and confute what we regard as important errors, connected with the Gospel, and to show that doctrines which have been hitherto considered as an essential part of Christianity are not contained in the New Testament, when it is interpreted and understood aright.

We dedicate this house, then, to the worship of God, and the teaching of the Gospel, in the spirit of a Christian zeal for those doctrines which we from our hearts believe to be the truth of God; in the spirit of a Christian zeal for what we deem to be just, practical, and evangelical views of religion and duty.

But earnestness in the cause of truth is not inconsistent with respect, kindness, and brotherly love towards those who differ from us in religious opinions. We would therefore dedicate this house to the worship of God and the teaching of Christ's Gospel, in the spirit of an enlightened charity as well as of a sincere zeal. However firmly we may contend for our own faith and our own rights, however strenuously we may resist what we deem the mistaken measures and erroneous doctrines of our fellow-Christians, God forbid that we should do so in a bitter and intolerant temper. We are not

so ignorant, or so presumptuous as to expect a uniformity of opinion, which never has and never can be established while man is man. We see that religious differences and religious controversies are unavoidable from the very constitution of the human mind, the circumstances of our condition, and the nature of the subjects of religion.

While there exists so wide a diversity among men in their capacities, their acquisitions, their means of information, and the influences by which they are surrounded, it is not strange that their views and opinions should have a corresponding diversity. One man sees only a part of the facts on which another has built his opinion; or if his knowledge of facts be as extensive, his mode of reasoning upon them may be different. He may view them under different relations, and draw from them different conclusions. You therefore find two persons of apparently equal opportunities of information passing opposite judgments upon questions in history, in politics, in the science of education, in the theory of government, in the principles of political economy, in ethics, in metaphysics, in natural philosophy, in astronomy, and in all the thousand branches of human knowledge. If such a diversity of sentiment exists even among those who have been brought up under similar influences, similar associations, similar modes of instruction, whose habits of thinking and feeling are therefore similar, what else can we expect among those whose circumstances and opportunities have been entirely different? — What is true with respect to all other

subjects is true also of religion, and probably to a still wider extent. — For in this *all* men have an interest, and a deep one. It addresses itself to their strongest fears and hopes. It involves their welfare not only for time but for eternity. They are therefore more generally concerned in this than in any other subject, and more likely, not only to form opinions, but to lay stress on the opinions they may form.

Besides, the subjects of religious difference are often of an abstruse and metaphysical nature, requiring not only extensive knowledge, but deep thought, refined discrimination and subtle reasoning. The nature, attributes, and moral government of an Infinite Being, whose perfections we can only faintly conceive and imperfectly comprehend, the mode in which He operates on the mind, the character, the powers, the destination of the soul, the conditions and means of salvation, the future world with its shadowy scenes just glimmering on our eyes, its employments, its retributions, — all present topics of dispute not easily settled by the most acute and the most enlightened.

Again, if we direct our attention more particularly to the volume of revelation, new sources of doubt and difficulty are set before us. The oracles of divine truth are uttered by God's messengers in human language, and all human language is subject to ambiguity. You can hardly write or speak a sentence which is not capable of two or more interpretations. Usually, in the common intercourse of life, we have no difficulty in ascertaining which

of them is intended by the words used. It is determined by the subject spoken of, by the laws of mental association, by the circumstances of the case already known to us, by the character and conduct of the speaker, and by many little accompaniments of gesture, tone, and look, which aid us in at once fixing upon the true idea represented by the uncertain sounds of the voice. But in *written* language we meet with much greater difficulty, because we have fewer of the aids which have been mentioned in determining the meaning. It is on account of this essential ambiguity of human language as a medium for the communication of thought, that it has been found necessary to devise the technicalities and careful repetitions and minute specifications of legal documents and legal decisions. How much nice particularity of expression is required to guard the last will and testament of the dying man against the questions that may be raised upon it. A doubtful preposition or an equivocal adverb may give rise to a long and vexatious controversy among the interested heirs. Now the books of the New Testament, the Testament of Jesus Christ, sealed with the blood of its Author are written, not like a legal document, but in a loose popular style. Its propositions are not expressed like those of a statute book, but in the style of narrative and of moral discourses, in which a legal precision is not needed nor expected. They are liable, therefore, to be variously understood and misunderstood. They are often capable of two interpretations, and to decide which is the true one will require thought

and study ; a consideration of many facts and circumstances ; and a comparison of the passage in question with many other passages, before we are properly qualified to ascertain the sense intended by the writer. — The difficulty is increased, in the case in question, by other circumstances, to which I can but briefly allude. The original languages in which the Scriptures are written are no longer spoken ; and we are often thrown adrift on the wide sea of grammatical conjecture when we attempt to explore their obscurities by the faint lights of verbal criticism. The customs and manners too of the people among whom the events recorded took place ; the peculiarities of thought and expression which mark the style of the several writers of the sacred books ; the modes of reasoning which they employ, the figures in which they delight ; the character of their minds, the circumstances of their situation ; the state of opinion and feeling among those whom they addressed ; the objections and prejudices they had to encounter ; — are all to be studied, understood, and borne in mind by one who wishes to enter into the true and full import of the Scriptures. I need not tell you how difficult it must be at this distance of time to ascertain satisfactorily all these preliminaries to a thorough understanding of the Bible. Is it wonderful, then, that it should contain much that seems obscure ? or that it should be differently understood and explained by different individuals, according to the different degrees of information which they possess, their different powers of judgment and

discrimination, and the different principles of reasoning and interpretation with which they come to the examination of the Gospel? — In view of these considerations it is out of the question, — even supposing all to be equally desirous of knowing the truth, and equally anxious to obey it — it is out of the question to expect a uniformity of religious belief in the world. There must be variety of opinion on this subject as on every other. While this variety of opinion exists, there will of course be a variety of distinct sects. Those who agree on some leading points of doctrine will organize themselves into associations for the support of what they deem to be essential or at least important truth. Thus the Christian community has always been, and always will be, divided into conflicting denominations; and controversies will continue as long as the present nature and condition of mankind remain the same.

With these views of the origin of religious differences and controversies (which, with all their evils and abuses, are useful, as means of discovering and spreading truth, and keeping up an interest in the subject of religion) we would look with the spirit of an enlightened charity on all of every name who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; who have a true desire to promote his kingdom of righteousness in themselves and in others. However erroneous their theological opinions may be, they are disciples of the same Lord whom we acknowledge, worshippers of the same God, members of that one vast church which comprehends the good and the wise of all ages

and all sects. They are fellow-travellers to the same heaven, though by various paths, which seem indeed to those who are walking in them to be widely separated, but are in fact all converging to the same common point, where the divided followers of Jesus will at length meet in a harmonious and eternal union. — We consider the different forms of belief among Christians, as but so many different shapes in which the same spirit of faith may dwell; so many different moulds in which the same material is cast; so many different developements of the same universal principle. The truth is, that in all these systems of theology, various and discordant as they appear, a few great principles of morality and religion, drawn from the clear teachings of the Gospel, and too plain to be disputed, exert an illuminating and sanctifying influence amidst the jarring elements of error. A little leaven of Christian truth leaveneth the noxious mass of false doctrine and makes it nutritive and wholesome. The mind, with a moral instinct, fixes upon the vital and practical part of a creed, and slides over the speculative errors connected with it. It either regards them as mysteries, and so does not think of them at all, or carry them out into their mischievous consequences, or it so explains them away, as to make them consistent with the sound conclusions of reason and common sense; or else they are so modified by other acknowledged principles, that they do not produce the bad effects to which they tend.

Thus it happens, that doctrines, which, in speculation, involve the most dangerous and immoral

consequences, are often harmless in their practical operation upon individuals who profess them. And thus it is that many opinions concerning the attributes and government of God, the nature of man, and the mediation of Christ, which to *us* appear erroneous and unscriptural, have been firmly held by men who are entitled to our admiration and love; in whom, what we should think the natural evil tendencies of such doctrines, are counteracted by causes to which I have already alluded; and who show themselves in all their conduct and temper to be under the influence of Christian motives and principles. God be praised that it is so! — God be praised that amidst the manifold and multiplying varieties of worship, and discipline, and doctrine, the great, vital, saving, and sanctifying principles of religion rise, like the spires of our churches, above the mists and fogs of earth, seen by all eyes, and guiding us on our way to heaven! God be praised for the glorious instances of this cheering fact; for the multitude which no man can number of this and of past ages, who have shone alike in the splendors of goodness, but have been ranked under different names in theology!

On these grounds we would gladly hail as brethren all who call themselves by the name of Christ, in whom we find the Christianity of the heart and the Orthodoxy of the life. We would tolerate every thing but intolerance. *That* must be exposed and put down an enemy and an outlaw, against whom even Charity must sometimes force herself to play the warrior that she may have a more lasting

peace. In contending, however, that the fundamentals of piety and true religion, the religion of the heart, are to be found in individuals of every sect, because every sect takes the New Testament for its rule of faith, and the moral, life-giving truths which are there written are too plain to be obscured by the errors of human speculation, it does not therefore follow that it is of no consequence what we believe, or that all systems of doctrine are equally well calculated to promote real godliness, and to advance the cause of Christ in the world. That of course must be the most powerful to this end, which approaches nearest to the truth of God, and to the faith as it was once delivered to the saints. It becomes my duty, then, and the duty of every Christian, to inquire by the lights which God has given us in his word and in his works, which of the religious systems proposed to us is the true one. In pursuing this inquiry, we are to consider which is the most reasonable, the most simple, the most easily understood, the most plain and practical; and again, which is most clearly taught in Scripture, which agrees best with the undisputed doctrines of the Bible, with its prevailing spirit, with the plain declarations of Christ and the Apostles, with their conduct and the conduct of those about them. Whatever may be the result of our inquiries, whatsoever among the various modifications of religious belief we are led to receive, that it is our duty, by all fair means, on all proper occasions, to maintain and to spread.

In being liberal, we are not to be indifferent to

the truth. While we joyfully acknowledge, that in many religious systems, which we on the whole condemn, there may be so much good as to overbalance the evil, and while we see that it is the practical part of a creed which is always the most efficient, we are not to forget that the errors, on which it is built, or which are connected with it, are so many clogs and hindrances to the power of true religion. Men become righteous and happy, not in consequence, but in *spite* of them ; and by their removal, they would be enabled to go on with a more rapid and easy step, and ascend far higher in the scale of goodness.

Besides this, we are to remember that such errors have made in past times and are still making infidels and skeptics everywhere ; and that the more clear and reasonable and consistent Christianity is shown to be in all its parts, the more readily it will be embraced, the more firmly it will be held, the more powerfully it will act on the heart and the life. As far then as, for these and for other reasons, the doctrines which we hold are important, and are likely in our opinion to promote the interests of vital religion and pure Christianity among men, it is our duty to contend earnestly for them. That there are good men in every sect is no argument for indifference, but only for toleration and charity. Although errors and absurdities have been neutralized and overlooked by *some* minds, they may not be, indeed we know they have not been, by *all*. And although the sanctifying influence of essential Gospel truth, which is in its

nature universal, and stamped with the eternity of the God from whom it came, has been felt in some degree of its power in all Christian denominations, we should wish to have it embraced in that form which will give it its most extensive and efficient influence. We are bound therefore to uphold and to diffuse, as far as we have opportunity, what we conceive to be truer and higher views than those of our fellow-Christians of other denominations; always keeping before us, as the great end and object of our endeavours, the promotion of vital piety and practical religion.

Entertaining such views of the course to be pursued amid the controversies of the present day, we now dedicate this church to the worship of God and to the teaching of the Gospel in the spirit of Christian zeal for the truth, and of Christian friendship towards all who differ from us. *

Henceforth then, my brethren, we are to assemble within these walls for the worship of God and the hearing of His word. Henceforth, with each returning Sabbath, are we to offer up in this place our spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving and prayer. Here, with each returning Sabbath, shall the voice of supplication ascend to the Father of Lights and the Father of Mercies for the gifts of His spirit; for the blessing which He has promised to His believing children; for holy dispositions and Christian graces; for perseverance in duty;

* A paragraph relating to the several churches erected for the use of the parish is here omitted; as the facts stated in it are contained in the previous discourse.

for strength to resist temptation ; for courage and cheerfulness in times of trial ; for resignation and trust and the inward peace which the world can neither give nor take away : — and these not only for ourselves, but for others ; for our friends, for our enemies, for the whole family of man. Here, with each returning Sabbath, will we sing with one accord the praises of the Most High God, and these walls shall echo back the strains of sacred melody which sound forth from the pealing organ, and the lips of the living voice. Here, with each returning Sabbath, will we sit in solemn or joyful meditations on the character and providence of the Father ; here renew the good purposes which have been choked by the cares of the world ; here dedicate our children in baptism to the service of God ; here break the bread and drink the wine of remembrance, as disciples of Him, whose body was broken, and whose blood was shed for many. Here, with each returning Sabbath, in the midst of our kindred and friends, we will hallow the bond of domestic love and the tenderness of domestic sympathy by the mingled pleasures of devotion ; here, with them, take sweet counsel from the oracles of truth on the ways and works of God, and the duties of man ; with them, prepare ourselves for death and for life, for the duties of time and the higher duties of eternity. — And may we never engage in the services of this house without a solemn sense of our dependence on the Almighty ; a sincere desire to learn and to obey His will ; and such motives and feelings as can

alone make our worship holy and acceptable in His sight. Never may these pure walls be desecrated to any unholy or uncharitable purpose. Never may this pulpit be converted into an arena for the pugilism of theology ; a show-place of polemical skill and vehemence ; a rostrum for religious demagogues ; a mount Sinai quaking with the thunders and earthquakes of denunciation. Let it be for higher and better uses. Let it be an altar of love to God, and love to man ; hallowed by the incense of heaven-seeking and heaven-blest hopes, desires, and affections ; an altar, over which the angels may sing their hymn of "*good will to men*," and hear no jarring notes to make discord of the music ; where Charity wreathes her olive branch, and Faith kneels with upward look gazing after her ascended Lord, and the Holy Spirit breathes its still and dovelike influences ; an altar, on which the name of the Prince of *Peace* is written in the blood shed for many for the *forgiveness* of sins, and He, who is over all and in all, the God of light and of love, even the *Father*, may dwell as upon His mercy-seat between the cherubims. — Holy Father, suffer us not to profane this thy dwelling-place by bitterness, or wrath, or evil speaking.

May this place be to each one of you the house of God and the gate of heaven. May you long enjoy its ministrations. May you never slight or abuse its privileges. May many of *you* live — if he who addresses does not — till the holy associations, which will gradually gather about this sanctuary, shall have given it a more peculiar sa-

credness. But it is not probable that many of those, who are now assembled within it as witnesses of its dedication unto God, will live to see another in its place. One by one, we are hastening in silent procession to the city of the dead. One by one, the frail worshippers in this earthly temple will be laid in the arms of the all-embracing grave. Ere many years shall have rolled swiftly by, another assembly, unknown to us, will occupy these seats, and the places that have known us will know us no more. Ere many years, or perchance many months, shall have been numbered with the past, the voices of some of those who have joined in the services of this day may be hushed in death. We shall pass away and be forgotten. As we wander among the tombs of this ancient burial-place, sunken monuments and obliterated epitaphs, telling of death, but not of the dead, give us sure warning of our own fate. We shall be forgotten by the busy actors in to-morrow's history; but our example and influence for good or for evil will live and act upon the generations that follow us. We shall be forgotten of men, but not of God; we shall be forgotten, but not dead. So live, then, mortal, immortal friends, that when this earthly sanctuary no longer hears your vows, and you can no longer utter them, — when yonder sun that now shines upon your living eyes, shall clothe your grave with funeral verdure, — you may dwell in your Father's house forever; where the sun of God's presence shall shine into your hearts; where the Holy Spirit of the Ever-

living One shall overshadow the pure soul, and fill it with such peace and joy, such power and love, as we can now neither conceive of, or describe, — where you will know Him better, and love Him more fervently, and serve Him more constantly and more acceptably forever; — even in that building of God, that “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

ERRATUM.

In the first Discourse on page 6 in the note, for “since 1815,” read “since the first Sunday in November, 1814.”

